

*Massachusetts English
Proficiency Assessment (MEPA)*

*Preliminary Statewide Results
Spring 2007*

July 2007
Massachusetts Department of Education

I. Introduction

Introduction to MEPA

In March 2007, the Massachusetts Department of Education administered the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) to limited English proficient (LEP) students in grades 3-12. This document reports how LEP students performed on the spring 2007 MEPA. A brief comparison of student performance on the spring 2005 and spring 2006 MEPA is also included.

A limited English proficient (LEP) student is “a student whose first language is a language other than English and who is not able to perform ordinary classroom work in English.”

Title III of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires states to assess all LEP students and report annually on the English proficiency performance and progress of LEP students. Additionally, Chapter 386 of the Massachusetts Acts of 2002 (known as “Question 2”) requires LEP students in Massachusetts to participate in annual assessments of English language proficiency.

In response to these mandates, the Massachusetts Department of Education developed the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), which was first administered to LEP students in fall of 2004. Thereafter, MEPA was annually administered in spring 2005, spring 2006 and spring 2007. In fall 2005 and fall 2006, MEPA was also administered to LEP students in grades 3-12 who did not have a baseline score from the previous spring MEPA administration.

MEPA is designed to evaluate the extent to which LEP students are able to listen, speak, read, and write in English. MEPA is a custom test, developed by the Department of Education in collaboration with local educators and a testing contractor. The content of the test is based on the learning objectives delineated in the publication, *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners* (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2003), which is available online at www.doe.mass.edu/ell/benchmark.pdf.

Interpreting This Report

This report enables readers to examine state performance on MEPA in spring 2007 and to compare that performance to those of spring 2005 and spring 2006.

Final statewide, district and school results will be released in October. These results will be based on the records of LEP students who had participated in at least two succeeding MEPA tests (so that their progress can be measured). The final results will be more appropriate for evaluating the progress of LEP students.

It is important to remember that the LEP student population is highly mobile. Many LEP students who participated in MEPA had only recently arrived in the United States. Therefore, caution should be taken when analyzing MEPA data. Apparent trends in data

across years may reflect changes in LEP student enrollment patterns and their different backgrounds, rather than actual district performance.

The MEPA Testing Administration

The MEPA program assists schools and districts by: (1) providing data and resources to strengthen curriculum, instruction, and classroom assessment; (2) measuring the progress made by LEP students toward English proficiency over time; and (3) identifying LEP students who have achieved proficiency in English.

MEPA consists of two assessments: the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment-Reading and Writing (MEPA-R/W) and the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O), which assesses proficiency in English-language comprehension (listening) and production (speaking). MEPA-R/W consists of a reading subtest and a writing subtest for LEP students in the following grade spans: 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, and 9–12. MEPA-R/W was first administered to all LEP students in grades 3-12 in Massachusetts public schools in fall 2004.

In spring 2007, MEPA-R/W was administered to all LEP students in grades 3–12, and MELA-O was administered to all LEP students in grades K–12. MELA-O requires that each LEP student be observed and evaluated over a period of time by a qualified MELA-O administrator (QMA) or qualified MELA-O trainer (QMT). Since LEP students in grades K-2 did not participate in the MEPA-R/W and had no MEPA scaled score and performance level, they are not included in this report. In 2007, the Massachusetts Department of Education administered the IDEA Proficiency Test to assess reading and writing in grades K-2 for students in Title III districts.

As part of the reporting process for MEPA results, the Department conducted standard-setting sessions to identify the minimum score required to attain each of the MEPA's four performance levels: *Beginning*, *Early Intermediate*, *Intermediate*, and *Transitioning*. The overall MEPA scaled score range is 300 to 400, with scaled score cut points of 325 for the *Beginning/Early Intermediate* cut and 375 for the *Intermediate/Transitioning* cut. The *Early Intermediate/Intermediate* scaled score cut point varies across grade spans, in accordance with the cut scores established during the MEPA standard setting process. Table 1 below shows the overall MEPA scaled score cut points for each grade span.

Table 1			
Overall MEPA Scaled Score Cut Points			
Grade Span	<i>Early Intermediate</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Transitioning</i>
3-4	325	349	375
5-6	325	346	375
7-8	325	346	375
9-12	325	343	375

MEPA performance level descriptions are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 General MEPA Performance Level Definitions	
Performance Level	Description
<i>Beginning</i>	<p>The student at this performance level is starting to develop the skills that will lead to effective communication in written and spoken English. A student performing at this level typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes simple written words and phrases • Writes basic words or phrases, with frequent errors • Speaks using basic words or phrases, with frequent errors • Understands basic spoken vocabulary or phrases
<i>Early Intermediate</i>	<p>The student at this performance level is developing skills that will lead to effective and complete communication in English. A student performing at this level typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes simple written words, phrases, and sentences, and reads and comprehends below grade-level texts • Writes short paragraphs with limited control of standard English conventions • Speaks using common words and simple phrases; word choice is often inappropriate or incorrect • Understands basic spoken vocabulary and phrases with frequent need for clarification
<i>Intermediate</i>	<p>The student at this performance level demonstrates increasing skills in using and understanding English. Oral and written communication, although somewhat inconsistent, is solid and usually understandable. A student performing at this level typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes common written words and some academic words, and comprehends simple grade-level texts • Writes short, simple compositions with partial control of standard English conventions • Speaks using common words and phrases and basic grammar and sentence structure; uses complex language structures but with occasional errors • Understands most oral communications, with some need for clarification
<i>Transitioning</i>	<p>The student at this performance level has achieved age-appropriate basic fluency in English, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. A student performing at this level typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes most common and academic words, and reads and comprehends moderately difficult grade-level texts • Writes short compositions demonstrating general control of standard English conventions • Speaks using appropriate and correct words, phrases, and expressions, as well as basic and complex grammar and sentence structures • Understands extended and prolonged oral communication, with little or no need for clarification

Status of Enrollment in Massachusetts Schools

Spring 2007 MEPA test results report the percentage of students statewide at each performance level based on the number of year(s) the students have been enrolled in a Massachusetts school.

In spring 2005 and spring 2006 MEPA reports, information about the number of years a student had been enrolled in school in the U.S. was collected on MEPA answer booklets and then validated to the extent possible with the Student Information Management System (SIMS). For instance, if a school reported a student as being in his or her first year, but that student had been in Massachusetts schools for three years according to SIMS, then the student was reported as a third-year student. However, if a student was reported by the school as being in his or her third year but in SIMS was recorded as being in his or her second year, then the student was allowed to remain in the third year category. In 2005 and 2006, years of enrollment were reported according to three categories: First Year, Second Year, and Third Year or More. Also in 2005 and 2006, enrollment in school was defined as a school year in which a student was enrolled for 15 days or more in the previous school year.

In spring 2007, the Department discontinued the practice of collecting years of enrollment on student answer booklets. Students who transferred into a Massachusetts school after attending school in another state are listed as first year students in 2007. Additionally, in 2007, new guidance from the U.S. Department of Education resulted in a change to the definition of a year of enrollment. Students are now considered enrolled in their first year as long as they were not enrolled in a Massachusetts school on or before March 1 of the previous school year (as reported in SIMS). Also in spring 2007, the number of years of enrollment available through SIMS allowed reporting to increase to five years or more, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3	
Definition of Years of Enrollment	
Spring 2005 and Spring 2006 (Reported by schools, validated by SIMS)	
First Year	Enrolled in a U.S. school for less than a year and not enrolled in Massachusetts more than 15 days in the previous school year
Second Year	Enrolled in U.S. schools for two years and not enrolled in Massachusetts schools for more than two years.
Third Year or More	Enrolled in U.S. schools for three years or more.
Spring 2007 (Based on SIMS)	
First Year	Enrolled in a Massachusetts school after March 1 of the previous school year
Second Year	Enrolled in a Massachusetts school for more than one, but not three years
Third Year	Enrolled in a Massachusetts school for more than two, but not four years
Fourth Year	Enrolled in a Massachusetts school for more than three, but not five years
Fifth Year or More	Enrolled in a Massachusetts school for five years or more

Please note the changes above when comparing data across the years.

II. Summary of Spring 2007 Statewide MEPA Results

Participation in MEPA Testing

MEPA participation rates are based on the students who were identified as LEP by districts and completed all portions of MEPA (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

In spring 2007, 32,044 LEP students in grades 3-12 participated in the MEPA administration. This represented a slight increase of 0.6% from the previous year, and a 2.6% increase from 2005.

In grade spans 3-4 and 5-6, the total participation in 2007 increased 2% and 3% respectively from spring 2006 and spring 2005. However, in grade spans 7-8 and 9-12, participation fell slightly (1.6% and 1.7%, respectively) from spring 2005 and spring 2006.

Table 4 below summarizes the participation of LEP students in statewide MEPA administration in spring 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Table 4 Number of LEP Students Participating in 2007 MEPA¹					
	Grades 3-4	Grades 5-6	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-12	Total
Spring 2007					
First Year	1,325	1,207	1,294	2,362	
Second Year	999	993	972	2,052	
Third Year	937	767	698	1,451	
Fourth Year	3,296	557	523	972	
Fifth Year or More	3,357	3,274	2,284	2,463	
All Students	9,962	6,851	5,833	9,398	32,044
Spring 2006					
First Year	1,044	1,021	936	2,065	
Second Year	1,006	885	970	1,934	
Third Year or More	7,693	4,685	4,017	5,529	
All Students	9,754	6,601	5,934	9,553	31,842
Spring 2005					
First Year	1,024	897	964	1,789	
Second Year	937	802	907	1,852	
Third Year or More	6,999	4,906	4,033	5,750	
All Students	9,046	6,666	5,940	9,565	31,217
1. Columns for number of students tested may not add up because the number of years in U.S./Massachusetts schools was not available for some students (less than 1 percent).					

Table 5 below presents information on the percent of enrolled LEP students in grades 3–12 who participated in the MEPA tests in spring 2005, 2006 and 2007. For grade spans 3–4, 5–6, and 9–12, there was a one percentage point decline in the MEPA participation rate compared to participation rate in 2006. For grade span 7–8, there was one percentage point increase in the MEPA participation rate compared with that of 2006.

Table 5				
Percent of LEP Students Participating in MEPA				
	Grades 3–4	Grades 5–6	Grades 7–8	Grades 9–12
Spring 2007				
First Year	98	98	98	95
Second Year	95	97	98	95
Third Year	96	97	97	92
Fourth Year	97	96	95	91
Fifth Year or More	95	94	94	81
All Students	96	95	96	89
Spring 2006				
First Year	98	97	95	93
Second Year	97	96	97	94
Third Year or More	96	95	94	88
All Students	97	96	95	90
Spring 2005				
First Year	97	98	98	95
Second Year	97	97	97	96
Third Year or More	96	96	94	91
All Students	96	96	95	92

A very small number of LEP students are not required to participate in MEPA-R/W. Students who are exempt from testing include:

- students with disabilities who require the accommodation of a Braille test or an electronic text reader, which are not available for MEPA-R/W tests;
- students with disabilities who require an alternate assessment;
- students with a medically documented absence; and
- students who are on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) on which the primary disability is reported as “deaf or hard of hearing” **and** require the administration of sessions 1 and 2 for the reading and/or writing tests.

Since MELA-O is an observational instrument used by trained teachers to evaluate a student’s English language listening and speaking skills, only LEP students on an IEP whose primary disability is reported as “deaf or hard of hearing” are not required to participate in MELA-O.

In fall 2007 the Department will provide a performance report based on all enrolled LEP students who participated in MEPA tests in 2005, 2006, and 2007.

Performance Results for Spring 2005, Spring 2006 and Spring 2007 MEPA

In order for an overall MEPA scaled score and performance level to be reported, the student must have complete scores in each of the four learning areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Scaled scores on MEPA range from 300 to 400. Only students who were tested and have complete scores in all of the tested learning areas are included in these results.

In 2007, the percent of students in grade span 3-4 performing at the Transitioning level continued to rise, from 50% in 2005, to 52% in 2006, to 54% in 2007. The percent of LEP students performing at the Transitioning level in grade span 9-12 also increased, from 33% in both 2005 and 2006 to 35% in 2007.

The percent of students performing at the Transitioning level in grade span 5-6 declined slightly from 42% in 2006 to 41% in 2007. The percent of students performing at the Transitioning level in grade span 7-8 decreased from 40% in 2006 (which significantly increased from 34% in 2005) to 35% in 2007.

In general, the longer LEP students attended U.S. schools, the higher their performance on MEPA.

Tables 6 through 9 and Figures 1 through 4 on the following pages provide summary data of MEPA participation and average scaled scores for grade spans 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-12 based on the MEPA administrations in spring 2005, spring 2006, and spring 2007.

Table 6
Spring 2005-Spring 2007 Statewide MEPA Results: Grades 3–4

	Number of Students Tested ²	Average Scaled Score	Percent of Students at Each Performance Level ¹			
			<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Early Intermediate</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Transitioning</i>
Spring 2007						
First Year	1,325	337	46	18	18	18
Second Year	999	362	15	16	28	41
Third Year	937	371	7	12	28	53
Fourth Year	3,296	376	2	9	29	60
Fifth Year or More	3,357	379	2	8	24	67
All Students	9,962	370	10	11	25	54
Spring 2006						
First Year	1,044	331	53	19	17	11
Second Year	1,006	356	18	20	31	30
Third Year or More	7,693	377	2	8	29	61
All Students	9,754	370	9	10	28	52
Spring 2005						
First Year	1,024	328	59	16	16	10
Second Year	937	355	19	21	30	30
Third Year or More	6,999	375	3	9	28	59
All Students	9,046	368	11	11	27	50

1. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

2. Columns for number of students tested may not add up because the number of years in U.S./Massachusetts schools was not available for some students (less than 1 percent).

**Figure 1. Percent of Students at Each Performance Level:
Grades 3-4, Spring 2007**

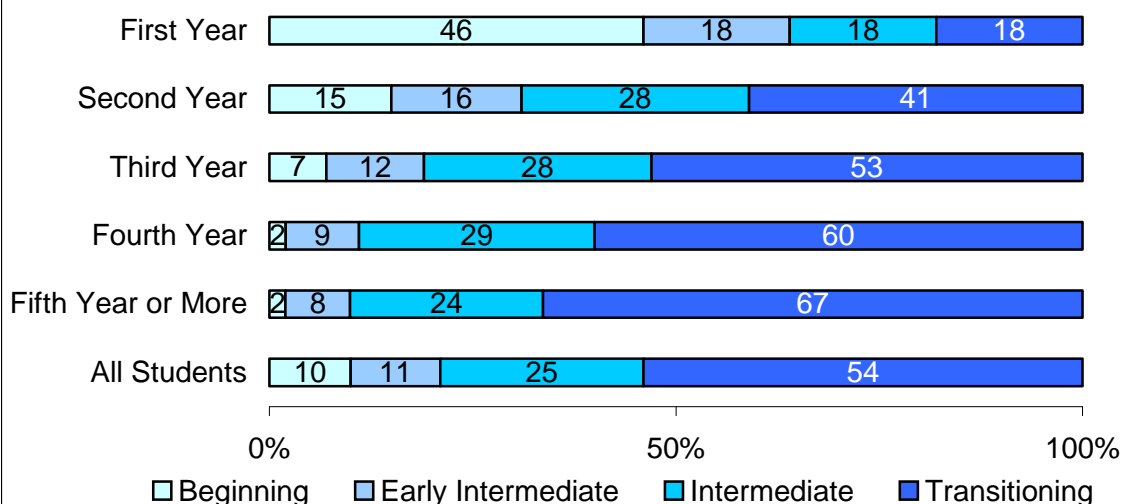


Table 7
Spring 2005-Spring 2007 Statewide MEPA Results: Grades 5-6

	Number of Students Tested ²	Average Scaled Score	Percent of Students at Each Performance Level ¹			
			<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Early Intermediate</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Transitioning</i>
Spring 2007						
First Year	1,207	336	47	18	21	15
Second Year	993	353	19	23	33	26
Third Year	767	365	9	15	35	41
Fourth Year	557	371	4	10	37	50
Fifth Year or More	3,274	374	3	8	35	54
All Students	6,851	362	14	13	32	41
Spring 2006						
First Year	1,021	330	54	18	19	10
Second Year	885	350	25	19	32	24
Third Year or More	4,685	372	3	9	35	52
All Students	6,601	363	14	12	32	42
Spring 2005						
First Year	897	325	63	14	14	9
Second Year	802	348	25	23	32	21
Third Year or More	4,906	371	5	10	35	51
All Students	6,666	362	15	12	31	41

1. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

2. Columns for number of students tested may not add up because the number of years in U.S./Massachusetts schools was not available for some students (less than 1 percent).

**Figure 2. Percent of Students at Each Performance Level:
Grades 5-6, Spring 2007**

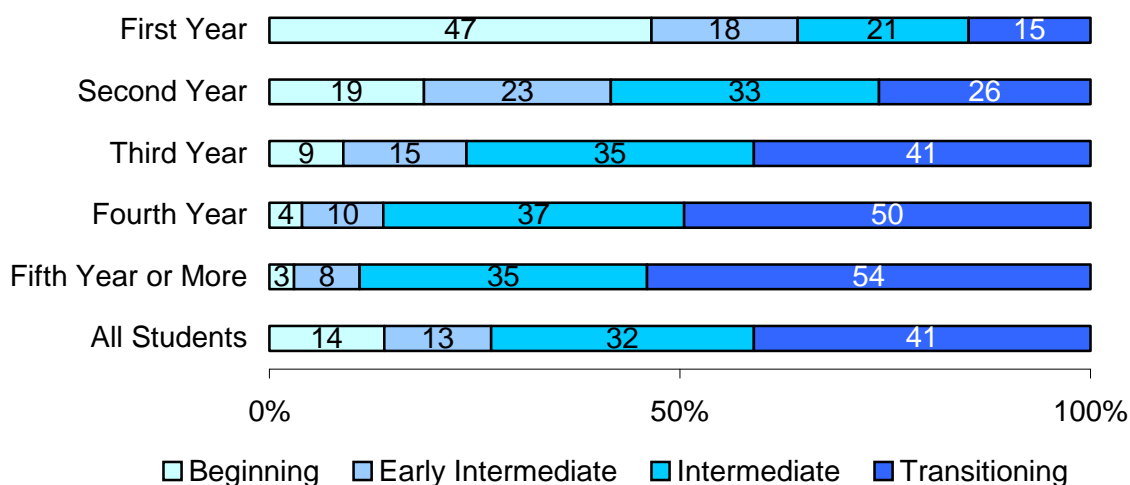


Table 8
Spring 2005-Spring 2007 Statewide MEPA Results: Grades 7-8

	Number of Students Tested ²	Average Scaled Score	Percent of Students at Each Performance Level ¹			
			<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Early Intermediate</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Transitioning</i>
Spring 2007						
First Year	1,294	334	51	15	18	16
Second Year	972	349	26	22	29	23
Third Year	698	361	12	18	36	34
Fourth Year	523	368	5	14	37	44
Fifth Year or More	2,284	371	4	11	36	49
All Students	5,833	357	20	15	31	35
Spring 2006						
First Year	936	331	57	13	16	14
Second Year	970	346	33	18	27	23
Third Year or More	4,017	370	7	11	32	51
All Students	5,934	360	19	12	29	40
Spring 2005						
First Year	964	325	62	15	14	9
Second Year	907	345	31	21	28	20
Third Year or More	4,033	367	8	12	37	43
All Students	5,940	357	21	14	32	34

1. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

2. Columns for number of students tested may not add up because the number of years in U.S./Massachusetts schools was not available for some students (less than 1 percent).

**Figure 3. Percent of Students at Each Performance Level:
Grades 7-8, Spring 2007**

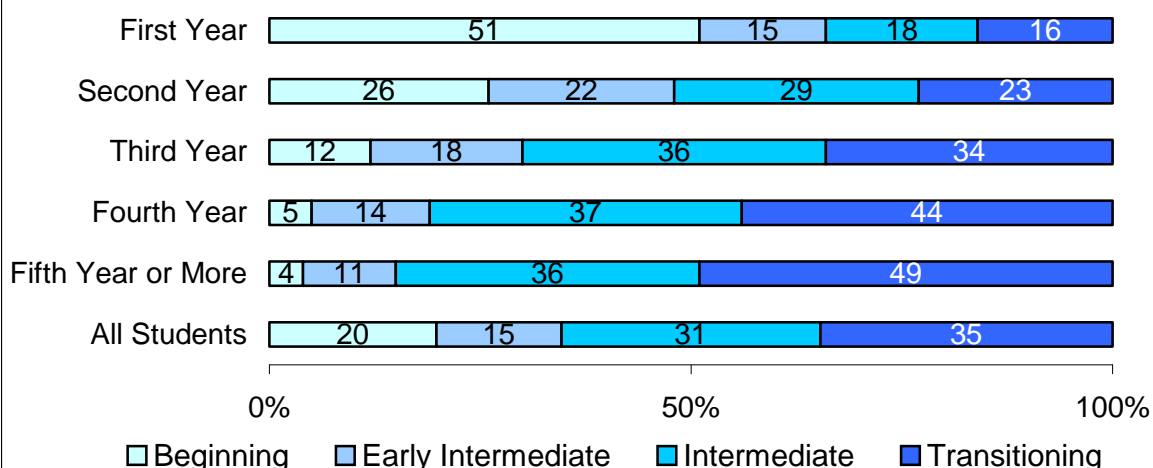


Table 9
Spring 2005-Spring 2007 Statewide MEPA Results: Grades 9–12

	Number of Students Tested ²	Average Scaled Score	Percent of Students at Each Performance Level ¹			
			<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Early Intermediate</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Transitioning</i>
Spring 2007						
First Year	2,362	339	43	14	23	20
Second Year	2,052	353	24	15	31	30
Third Year	1,451	362	14	12	34	40
Fourth Year	972	365	11	10	37	42
Fifth Year or More	2,463	368	8	8	37	47
All Students	9,398	356	22	12	31	35
Spring 2006						
First Year	2,065	334	51	13	20	15
Second Year	1,934	350	27	14	31	28
Third Year or More	5,529	364	12	10	37	41
All Students	9,553	355	23	12	32	33
Spring 2005						
First Year	1,789	336	49	14	19	18
Second Year	1,852	351	25	16	31	28
Third Year or More	5,750	363	12	12	36	40
All Students	9,565	355	22	13	32	33

1. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

2. Columns for number of students tested may not add up because the number of years in U.S./Massachusetts schools was not available for some students (less than 1 percent).

**Figure 4. Percent of Students at Each Performance Level:
Grades 9-12, Spring 2007**

